

Introduced by Senators Alarcon and Romero

January 8, 2003

Senate Joint Resolution No. 3—Relative to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 3, as introduced, Alarcon. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

This measure would, among other things, urge the Congress of the United States to increase TANF block grant funding to certain states, allow states, until January 1, 2005, to use TANF funds for eligible families who have used 60 months of TANF eligibility, and consider “stopping the clock” on TANF assistance for recipients who are meeting work participation requirements or live in counties with high unemployment rates.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, In 1996, the federal government restructured the
- 2 nation’s safety net for poor families, replacing the Aid to Families
- 3 with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with the Temporary
- 4 Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program in an
- 5 attempt to better transition families toward self-reliance; and
- 6 WHEREAS, The new welfare law imposed a 60-month time
- 7 limit on the receipt of federally funded cash assistance, allowing
- 8 only 20 percent of a state’s cases to be exempted for “hardship”
- 9 reasons; and
- 10 WHEREAS, In response to the 1996 federal changes, California
- 11 enacted the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to
- 12 Kids (CalWORKs) program in 1997, which limits adults, but not



1 children, to 60 cumulative months of cash assistance, with
2 designated exceptions for those unable to work; and

3 WHEREAS, As many as 50,000 recipients were expected to
4 reach the CalWORKs five-year limit on January 1, 2003, with
5 more recipients expected to reach the limit throughout 2003 and
6 beyond; and

7 WHEREAS, Working parents, most in low-paying jobs with
8 few opportunities for self-sufficiency, make up a majority of those
9 who will reach the time limit; and

10 WHEREAS, In many counties, a majority or near majority of
11 parents reaching the time limit are married as well as working,
12 contradicting the stereotypes of idle single parents that underlay
13 the creation of time limits; and

14 WHEREAS, The termination of cash assistance will increase
15 hardships for families, including hunger and the inability to meet
16 housing costs; and

17 WHEREAS, The deepening economic crisis reflected in the
18 decline in the stock market has caused a severe reduction in
19 revenues that threatens vital services for the poor, including
20 subsidized child care; and

21 WHEREAS, California's unemployment rate is at 6.4 percent,
22 making it even more difficult for workers eligible for TANF
23 benefits to obtain more gainful employment in the near future; and

24 WHEREAS, Studies of welfare "leavers" show that leaving
25 welfare usually does not mean living in self-sufficiency; and

26 WHEREAS, The TANF block grant, as enacted in 1996,
27 expired on September 30, 2002, but has been temporarily extended
28 by Congress until March 31, 2003; and

29 WHEREAS, Congress is now considering reauthorization of
30 the TANF block grant as well as the level of, and rules governing,
31 federal funding; now, therefore, be it

32 *Resolved by the Senate and Assembly of the State of California,*
33 *jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California recognizes
34 California's pending economic crisis and that reductions in TANF
35 funding will further exacerbate economic hardships to working
36 families; and be it further

37 *Resolved,* That the Legislature of the State of California
38 recognizes that retention of time limits on TANF assistance to
39 needy families will not only worsen California's economy, but the
40 economies of other states as well; and be it further



1 *Resolved*, That the Legislature of the State of California urges
2 the Congress of the United States to do all of the following:

3 (1) Increase TANF block grant funding to states that, like
4 California, are facing severe shortfalls in their ability to adequately
5 fund services and benefits for low-income families.

6 (2) At a minimum, until January 1, 2005, allow states to use
7 TANF funds for eligible families who have used 60 months of
8 TANF eligibility.

9 (3) Consider “stopping the clock” on TANF assistance for
10 recipients who are meeting work participation requirements or
11 who live in counties with high unemployment rates; and be it
12 further

13 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
14 this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
15 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the
16 Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and
17 Representative from California in the Congress of the United
18 States.

